

Protecting Trout Streams

North Carolina benefits from an abundance of fertile farmland and some of the best trout water in the eastern United States. But ensuring these resources are available for future generations requires responsible, commonsense management. In 2021, a local landowner cleared hundreds of acres of mountainside forest in Surry County resulting in significant water quality problems in Ramey Creek, an important stronghold for the Southern Appalachian Brook Trout, the official freshwater fish of North Carolina, and our only native trout species.



This nearly eradicated the local trout population, leading the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to stage a rare rescue effort to capture and relocate trout in an attempt to preserve their genetic lineage.

The sedimentation problems were enabled by the agricultural exemption under North Carolina's Sedimentation Pollution Control Act which exempts agricultural operations from basic water quality protections—like leaving small vegetative buffers on streams—applicable to virtually all other land disturbing activities

To prevent similar catastrophes while continuing to meet the needs of farmers, we propose amending the Sediment Pollution Control Act to require new agricultural operations to leave a 25-foot buffer along DEQ-designated trout streams while leaving

the remainder of the agricultural exemption intact. This minimal safeguard will help prevent the loss of farmland from stream erosion as well as protect trout fishing in North Carolina, which has an annual economic impact of \$1.38 billion.



For more information, contact Manley Fuller,
manley@ncwf.org

